

ON THE PRESENTATIONS OF PROSKYNESIS OF THE BYZANTINES BEFORE THEIR EMPEROR

For centuries, proskynesis represented one of the most important terms in the vocabulary of Byzantine court ceremonial. All those who would approach the emperor, except the patriarch, as well as those the emperor was passing by, were obliged to prostrate themselves and kiss the basileus' feet. Also, proskynesis was an especially important element of inauguration and coronation ceremonies. Irrespective of whether the emperor was awarding higher rank to a court dignitary, or even being crowned himself, the final phase of the ceremony comprised the expression of submission with a deep proskynesis by the subordinated dignitaries. They were also obliged to make the same gesture before other members of the ruler's family.¹ However, after she had been crowned as empress by her husband, the Byzantine empress herself, who received expressions of submission from others, would also prostrate herself, crown on head, in a deep proskynesis before the autocrat, kissing his feet.² In that way, she expressed her subordination, at least theoretical, to the state's supreme ruler. Finally, proskynesis was performed by the emperor himself. Analogously, he would prostrate himself before his superiors, from whom he had received dignity and power. Naturally, they did not exist on Earth but only in Heaven, where the Emperor of Emperors resides with his heavenly courtiers. Visual testimony of the demonstration of such submission to God has been offered in several

¹ On proskynesis in the Byzantine ceremonial cf. O. Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee nach ihrer Gestaltung im höfischen Zeremoniell vom oströmischen Staats- und Reichsgedanken*, Darmstadt 1956², 84-94, 222-225; W. T. Avery, *The Adoratio Purpurae and the Importance of the Imperial Purple in the Fourth Century of Christian Era*, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, 17 (1940), 79; R. Guiland, *Autour du Livre des Cérémonies de Constantin VII Porphyrogénète. La cérémonie de la προσκύνησις*, *Revue des études grecques* 59-60 (1946-1947), 251-259; Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des offices*, introduction, texte et traduction par J. Verpeaux, Paris 1966, 235-237, 261, 275, 283, 285, et passim; A. Cutler, *Proskynesis and Anastasis*, in: idem, *Transfigurations. Studies in Dynamics of Byzantine Iconography*, University Park 1975, 59, n. 44, 60, 63, n. 72, 69-70; P. Yannopoulos, *Le couronnement de l'empereur à Byzance: rituel et fond institutionnel*, *Byzantion* 61/1 (1991), 79; C. N. Tsirpanlis, *The Imperial Coronation and Theory in "De cerimoniis aulae Byzantinae" of Constantine VII Porphyrogennitus*, *Κληρονομία* 4 (1972), 71.

² Cf. Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des offices*, 261, 262.



Fig. 1 Byzantine emperor (Leo VI?) falls prostrate before Christ. Mosaic in the lunette over the Imperial Door of Saint Sophia in Constantinople

Сл. 1 Византијски цар (Лав VI?) пада ничице пред Христом. Мозаик у лунети над царским вратима Свете Софије у Цариграду

preserved portraits of emperors, or is known from written sources (fig. 1).³ However, in the view of prominent scholars in Byzantology, the proskynesis of the Byzantines before the earthly basileus, as a very important ritual in the ruler's cult as well as a constitutive element in the symbolism of autocratic power, was not at all adequately reflected in the fine arts.

Andre Grabar recognizes only one specific example of the representation of proskynesis before the Emperor in Byzantine monuments.⁴ This is a miniature at the beginning of the Psalter of the emperor Basil II from the National Library of St. Mark's (Marciana) in Venice, where the conquered barbarians fall beneath the feet of the "Bulgar-Slayer" (*Boulgaroktonos*) (fig. 2). Grabar rightfully points out that in this proskynesis, the *Rhomaioi*, citizens of the Empire, are not depicted, but the chiefs of the defeated nations, instead. In that respect, the miniature from Basil's Psalter resembles the much older relief on the Obelisk of Theodosios I in Constantinople (fig. 3).⁵ That was why it seemed to Andre Grabar that the proskynesis in Byzantine art was always reserved only for barbarians, who, falling to their knees, recognized the authority of the emperor

³ I. Spatharakis, *The Proskynesis in Byzantine Art. A Study in Connection with a Nomisma of Andronicus II Paleologue*, Bulletin Antieke Beschaving 49 (1974), 190-205; D. Vojvodić, "Shrouded in earthly image". *On the images of Byzantine and Serbian medieval rulers in proskynesis*, Church Studies. Annual Journal of the Centre of Church Studies 4 (Niš 2007), 379-401 (in Serbian with an English summary).

⁴ Cf. A. Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin*, Paris 1936, 86-87, pl. XXIII, 1.

⁵ Ibidem, 65, pl. XII, 2.

of the *Rhomaioi*. In order to express submission and reverence of the Byzantines before the emperor, artists resorted to depicting other kinds of gestures. In the said distinguished Byzantine scholar's opinion, those gestures were "maybe less expressive, but worthier of "citizens of the Roman Empire". Grabar believed that was the reason why imperial art in its repertoire never permitted one specific, completely Byzantine motive such as proskynesis. Despite all social changes, Byzantine imperial art remained linked to the classical concepts of a perfect Roman ruler. That perfect ruler had to possess all the virtues of an ideal ruler – the opponent of tyranny. On the other hand, proskynesis, according to Grabar, was the expression actually of a slavish submission to tyrants, so that it insulted the dignity of the Greeks and Romans. Therefore, in Grabar's opinion, imperial iconography, "comme toute iconographie d'essence religieuse", used forms that were the expression of a social reality that had become obsolete, long ago.⁶

It is obvious that the aforesaid views concerned the very conceptual core of Byzantine imperial art, as well as the key mechanisms of its creation, at the same time touching on the essence of the Byzantine rulers' ideology. Unfortunately, until now, inadequate attention has been paid to checking and more carefully considering those views. Iohannis Spatharakis, very briefly and not quite definitely, commented on Grabar's beliefs, without at all considering the argumentation of his renowned predecessor.⁷ Besides, Spatharakis's analytical position in that interesting and useful study was not completely watertight. Some key, most eloquent examples of proskynesis in Byzantine art escaped him. Apparently, because of all that, some of Spatharakis's conclusions on the status of proskynesis in Byzantine art were not wholeheartedly accepted by science. Sometime later, Anthony Cutler and Paul Magdalino only made a passing reference to the issues initiated by Grabar.⁸ Although they were in a position to point out certain representations of proskynesis by the Byzantines before their emperor, which Spatharakis had overlooked, the mentioned authors did not go



Fig. 2 Psalter of Basil II; National Library of St. Mark's (Marciana) in Venice, gr. Z 17, fol. 3r

Сл. 2 Псалтир Василија II, Венеција,
Biblioteca Marciana, gr. Z 17, fol. 3r

⁶ Ibidem, 85-86.

⁷ Spatharakis, *The Proskynesis in Byzantine Art*, 202.

⁸ Cutler, *Proskynesis and Anastasis*, 70; P. Magdalino – R. Nelson, *The Emperor in Byzantine Art of the Twelfth Century*, *Byzantinische Forschungen* 8 (1982), 137.



Fig. 3 Defeated barbarians in proskynesis. Obelisk of the emperor Theodosios I in Constantinople

Сл. 3 Побеђени варвари у проскинези. Обелиск цара Теодосија I у Цариграду

into an analysis of Grabar's theses. Actually, not so differently from Grabar, they emphasized that such images were quite a rare phenomenon. That implies a discrepancy between the ideology contained in the essence of ceremonial and ideology inspiring those images, therefore it naturally leads to the conclusion about a certain negative attitude towards the proskynesis of the *Rhomaioi* in Byzantine art.

However, the already mentioned fact that the Byzantine emperor was depicted as prostrating himself before Christ and the saints, awakens some doubts regarding such interpretations. Numerous questions arise in this regard. Did the basileus not have the Roman people's dignity and was the aura of a tyrant appropriate to Christ? Or vice versa: did not the icon of the Pantocrator on Earth, and that was the emperor,⁹ deserve the reverence which the *Rhomaioi* otherwise showed to the icons of the Lord, and, to the Lord himself (fig. 4)?¹⁰ Why would

⁹ M.-F. Auzépy, *Le Christ, l'empereur et l'image (VIIe-IXe siècle)*, in: *Εὐνοχία. Mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler*, t. I. [Byzantina Sorbonensia, 16], Paris 1998, 35-47, 35-43.

¹⁰ Cf. L.-P. Raybaud, *Le gouvernement et l'administration centrale de l'empire byzantin sous les premiers Paléologues (1258-1354)*, Paris 1968, 89, where an understanding is stated, correct in essence, that the reverence made to the emperor in Byzantium was, actually,

Fig. 4 Palaeologan family before the icon of the Virgin with the Child. Hamilton Psalter, Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin, MS 78 A 9, fol. 39v

Сл. 4
Палеологовска
породица пред
иконом Богородице
са Христом.
Хамилтон
псалтир, Берлин,
Kupferstichkabinett,
MS 78 A 9, fol. 39v



proskynesis offend the dignity of the Byzantines on an image if it did not offend their dignity in reality, that is, in a ceremony like a “live picture”. Ultimately, did that mean that a highly self-assured medieval society was really ashamed of itself, and therefore, hypocritically strove to hide behind images of itself borrowed from the times of Antiquity. Ostensibly, the works of Byzantine art themselves provide the frame for the answers to all those questions.

It is noticeable, at first, that deep proskynesis customarily belonged to the dictionary of the iconography of the Byzantine religious image.¹¹ Joshua falls prostrate before the Archangel Michael, like our forefather Abraham before the angels – the personification of the Holy Trinity. Christ himself, when addressing his Father on the Mount of Olives, does so in a position of proskynesis. Hailing the advent of the new empire, Adam and Eve, the first parents of mankind, approach the throne of the eternal emperor, greeting him on their knees, in the presentation of the Last Judgment - in complete conformity with Byzantine court ceremonial (fig. 5). The representation of the Mocking of Christ also illustrates how much proskynesis before the emperor was close to the comprehension of Byzantine painters. Ridiculing him as the king of the Jews, the tormentors cast a purple robe around the figure of the Savior, they placed a crown of thorns on his head and a reed in his hand for a sceptre, and mocked by genuflecting to him (fig. 6).¹² One representation from the famous manuscript no. 510 in the

directed to God, for the emperor’s dignity was only understood as the reflection of God’s dignity.

¹¹ Cutler, *Proskynesis and Anastasis*, passim.

¹² С. Радојчић, *Ругање Христу на фресци у Старом Нагоричину*, in: idem, *Узори и дела старих српских уметника*, Београд 1975, 155-179, сл. 20; Б. Тодић, М. Чанак-Медић, *Манастир Дечани*, Београд 2005, сл. 380-381-381.



Fig. 5 Adam and Eve in the presentation of the Last Judgment. Fresco painting in the Dečani monastery

Сл. 5 Адам и Ева на представи Страшног суда. Фреска у манастиру Дечанима



Fig. 6 Mocking of Christ. Fresco painting in the Dečani monastery

Сл. 6 Ругање Христу. Фреска у манастиру Дечанима

Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, was more directly included in the frame of court ceremonial. This was the last scene of the cycle depicting the life of Joseph the Beautiful. After the scene of Joseph being brought to the kingdom, the Old Testament hero is represented with the insignia of the Byzantine emperor in a majestic pose, while his subjects lie prostrate on the ground, expressing submission to him (fig. 7).¹³

Presentations of proskynesis before the emperor have left some more visible traces in court art than previously believed. In the Musée de Cluny, the famous ivory plaque made in 982-983,¹⁴ in keeping with completely Byzantine imperial iconography,¹⁵ portrays Otto II and the Byzantine princess Theophano, as being crowned by Christ. At the bottom of the scene, a small-scale figure of the donor John, probably John Philagathos, is prostrate on the ground (fig. 8). There is no doubt that he is praying to

¹³ S. Der Nersessian, *The Illustrations of Gregory of Nazianzus*, Paris gr. 510. *A Study of the Connections between Text and Images*, Dumbarton Oaks Papers 16 (1962), 223-224, fig. 18; Cutler, *Proskynesis and Anastasis*, 70.

¹⁴ *The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, AD 843-1261*, ed. by H. C. Evans, W. D. Wixom, New York 1997, 499-501 (no. 337).

¹⁵ J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *The Art of Byzantium and its relation to Germany in the time of the empress Theophano*, in: *The empress Theophano. Byzantium and the West at the turn of the first millennium*, ed. by A. Davids, Cambridge 1995, 212-213.

Fig. 7 Scene from the
Life of Joseph the
Beautiful. Homilies of
Gregory of Nazianzos,
Paris Gr. 510, fol. 69r

Сл. 7 Сцена из
повести о Јосифу.
Хомилије Григорија
Назијанског, Paris Gr.
510, fol. 69r



God, testimony of which is the accompanying Greek inscription. Meanwhile, this donor figure is positioned beneath the feet of Otto II, who is designated as “Imperator Romanorum Augustus”. It is quite clear, therefore, that, according to the graded hierarchy of titles expressing devotion to Christ, this is also transferred to Christ’s *vicar* on Earth. Clearer still is the representation of a painter or a writer in the manuscript of the Homilies of St. John Chrysostom from the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, MS. Coislin no. 79. Above the miniature with the portrait of the emperor Michael VII Doukas a prayer is written, devoted to the emperor for the well-being of his

Fig. 8 Emperor Otto II and the empress
Theophano crowned by Christ. Ivory plaque,
Musée de Cluny

Сл. 8 Христос крунише цара Ота II и
царицу Теофану. Плоча од слоноваче,
Musée de Cluny

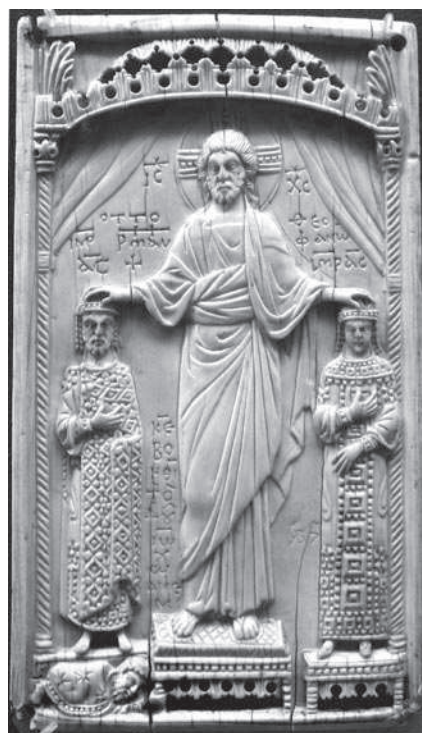
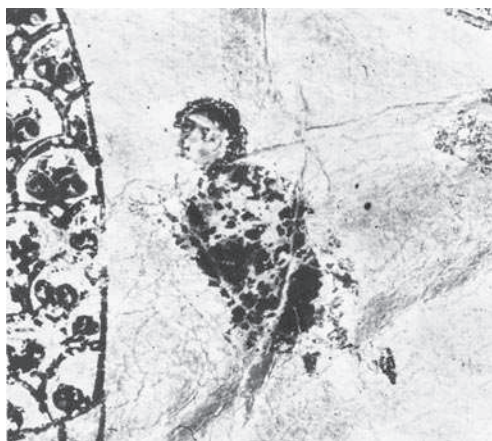




Fig. 9 St. John Chrysostom offering his Homilies to Michael VII. Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, MS. Coislin no. 79, fol. 2v

Сл. 9 Св. Јован Златоусти дарује своје хомилије Михаилу VII. Париз, Bibliothèque nationale, MS. Coislin no. 79, fol. 2v



subject, whose reduced portrait is presented near the imperial suzerainty (fig. 9-10). He is kneeling on the ground and raising his hands in prayer towards the ruler.¹⁶

That miniature may help, in some measure, in contemplating an interesting but damaged composition from the time of the emperor Manuel I. Known only from an ancient description in verse, the composition decorated the façade on the house of the senior dignitary, protosebastos and protovestiarios John, in Constantinople. Alexios I, John II and Manuel I Komnenos were represented on it. In deep proskynesis before the last of these emperors, was the owner of the house, "for," as the verses state, "showing the servitude and incomparable loyalty which he cherishes towards him, he falls at his feet even in the representation".¹⁷ Furthermore, the verses highlight the emperor's beneficence towards John and mention the grateful dignitary's prayers for the emperor's well-being. Since this was a representative image placed in front of the protovestiarios' front door, it is quite clear that the dignitary did not consider the image, showing him in proskynesis before the emperor, to be humiliating at all. On the contrary, in plain view of the citizens of the capital, it served

Fig. 10 Detail from fig. 9

Сл. 10 Детаљ са слике 9

¹⁶ I. Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts*, Leiden 1976, 111-112, fig. 72; S. Kalopissi-Verti, *Painters' Portraits in Byzantine Art*, ΔΧΑΕ 17 (1993-1994), 132, figs. 5-6.

¹⁷ S. Lampros, 'Ο μαρκιανός Κώδιξ 524, Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων 8 (1911), 37 (34α); Magdalino -Nelson, *The Emperor in Byzantine Art of the Twelfth Century*, 136-137.



Fig. 11 Byzantine emperor Theophilos and his courtiers. Madrid manuscript of the Chronicle of Skylitzes, fol. 42r

Сл. 11 Византијски цар Теофил и његови дворани. Мадридски рукопис Хронике Јована Скилице, fol. 42r

to magnify John's loyal and close relationship with the emperor. This complied fully with certain stratum of the meaning of proskynesis in court ceremonial. In Byzantium, proskynesis was, among other things, considered to be a privilege reserved only for the highest dignitaries in the Empire.¹⁸ A scene describing the inauguration of the emperor Theophilos in 829 is of a slightly different character. It is in the Madrid manuscript of the Chronicle of Skylitzes, copied and painted in the 13th century. Approaching the newly proclaimed emperor from the right are high-ranking dignitaries, who are expressing their submission to him, in keeping with the rules of ceremony. The first in line has already approached the ruler and, having prostrated himself on the ground, is kissing his feet (fig. 11-12).¹⁹



Fig. 12 Detail from fig. 11

Сл. 12 Детаљ са слике 11

¹⁸ Cf. Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee*, 87-89; Guiland, *La cérémonie de la проσκύνησις*, passim.

¹⁹ Editors did not notice his appearance. Cf. A. Grabar, M. Manoussacas, *L'illustration*



Fig. 13 Ivory pyxis,
Dumbarton Oaks
Collection

Сл. 13 Пиксида
од слоноваче,
Dumbarton Oaks
Collection

The fact that proskynesis was also known at the court of the Palaiologoi is not only attested by textual sources, such as Pseudo-Kodinos' *Treatise on the Dignities and Offices*. On the famous ivory pyxis from the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, a representative of the citizens of Thessalonica is bringing a model of „the second city of the Empire“ to the emperor John VII, and to his wife and son (fig. 13).²⁰ Symbolizing all the citizens of Thessalonica, he is doing so by kneeling on the ground and bowing deeply in proskynesis. One should also stress that the gesture of the deepest proskynesis in Palaiologan times was slightly modified, under the influence of the West.²¹ Finally, in the illustrated manuscript of the *Alexander Romance* from Venice, created during Palaiologan times, in the Empire of Trebizond, a large number of miniatures existed, showing representatives of the conquered nations, and also Macedonians, genuflecting before Philip and Alexander of Macedonia, who bear the insignia of the Byzantine basileus (fig. 14). Even Alexander himself on some miniatures is approaching his father in proskynesis, kissing his thighs (fig. 15).²² It is well known that the ancient Macedonians, as all peoples of the Greek culture, adamantly refused to prostrate themselves before the ruler, seeing it as a Persian custom. They were even hostile to Alexander's attempt to introduce at banquets

du manuscrit de Skylitzès de la Bibliothèque nationale de Madrid, Venise 1979, 39, fig. 33.

²⁰ N. Oikonomides, *John VII Palaeologus and the Ivory Pyxis at Dumbarton Oaks*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 31 (1977), 329-337, fig. 1a-f (with older literature). For earlier, rather different explanations of these portraits cf. Spatharakis, *The Proskynesis in Byzantine Art*, 200-201, 204.

²¹ N. Teteriatnikov, *The New Image of Byzantine Noblemen in Paleologan Art*, *Qua-derni Utinensi* 15/16 (1996), 309-319.

²² A. Xyngopoulos, *Les miniatures du Roman d'Alexandre le Grand dans le codex de l'Institut Hellénique de Venise*, Athènes-Venise 1966, figs. 16a, 20b, 42, 47, 50, 58, 59a, 93b, 100a, 115b, 122, 124, 139a, 160, 161, 204, 215, 236, 243, etc.

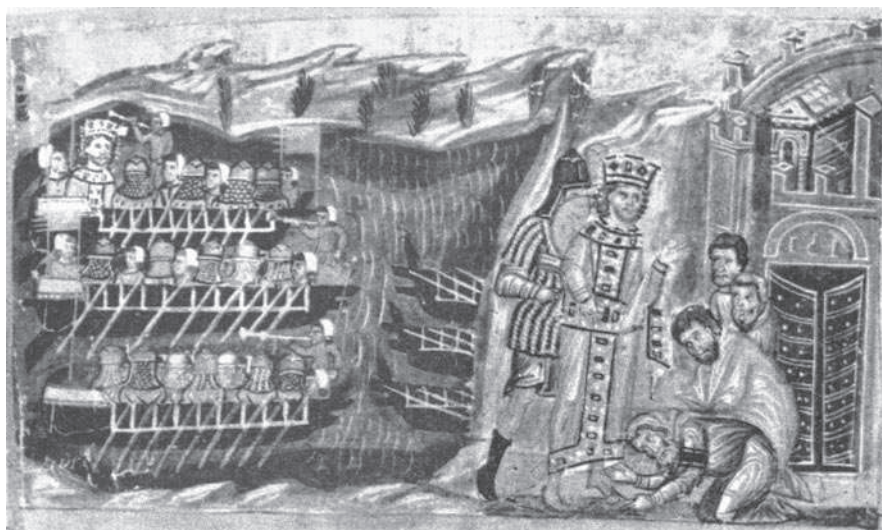


Fig. 14 Alexander returns in Macedonia to prepare his navy for a campaign. Illustrated Alexander Romance from Venice, fol. 42r

Сл. 14 Александар се враћа у Македонију да припреми своју флоту за ратну кампању. Илустровани роман о Александру из Венеције, fol. 42r



Fig. 15 Alexander before Philip. Illustrated Alexander Romance from Venice, fol. 23v

Сл. 15 Александар пред Филипом. Илустровани роман о Александру из Венеције, fol. 23v

the practice of quite a modified, indirect form of proskynesis.²³ The said images from the Alexander Romance represent recognizable quotations from the Byzantine ceremonial and point to a process that was in complete contrast to the one proposed by Grabar. It is obvious that the Byzantines considered their customs to be worthy of the heroic times of Antiquity, therefore, they also included them in the pictures of events that took place even at the dawn of the Hellenistic period.

It would be improper of us if we claimed that one could endlessly enumerate such examples. Nevertheless, the presentations we have mentioned are eloquent enough and illustrate how the depiction of the deep proskynesis of the *Rhomaioi* people before their emperor was not unacceptable in Byzantine art and was not systematically eliminated from it. Moreover, it is clear that the painted presentations of *Rhomaioi* falling prostrate before their ruler did not divest the citizens of the Byzantine Empire of their dignity. On the contrary, as the emperor's relative, it is even with a sense of pride that the aforesaid protovestiarios John presents his own image genuflecting to the basileus. The Byzantine imperial image in its different aspects represented a series of more or less consistent quotations from the rules of ceremony. And again, as a kind of "political theatre" or "court liturgy", the ceremonial was designed, through symbols and "live pictures" to explain the essence, nature and distribution of power. The evocation of forms from the past, therefore, existed in imperial art, as much as it did in the theory about the Empire. For its part, proskynesis conveyed messages that were entirely in keeping with this imperial and state ideology, that is, with Byzantine political theology. Its presence on the Byzantine imperial image was therefore quite acceptable. The fact that not many more presentations of demonstrating the deepest submission before the emperor are known is not because of a negative attitude to proskynesis in Byzantine visual art. It is the result of the scarcity of the imperial art fund and the nature, that is, the type of images that have been preserved till the present day.

Драган Војводић

О ПРЕДСТАВАМА ПРОСКИНЕЗЕ РОМЕЈА ПРЕД СВОЈИМ ЦАРЕМ

Проскиназа је, као израз подаништва врховној власти, вековима представљала један од најзначајнијих појмова у речнику византијског дворског церемонијала. Сви они који би приступали цару, изузев патријарха, као и они крај којих је цар пролазио, били су дужни да падну ничице на земљу и целивају василевсова стопала. Угледни византолог Андреј Грабар, међутим, својевремено је изнео мишљење да су у ставу дубоке проскинезе пред царем у византијској уметности представљани само варвари. Приказивање самих Ромеја како падају ничице пред земаљским господарем било

²³ L. Ross Taylor, *The 'Proskynesis' and the Hellenistic Ruler Cult*, *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 47/1 (1927), 53-62; G. C. Richards, *Proskynesis*, *The Classical Review* 48/5 (1934), 168-170; W. Heckel, *Leonnatos, Polyperchon and the Introduction of Proskynesis*, *The American Journal of Philology* 99/4 (1978), 459-461.

је, наводно, недостојно и неспојиво с византијским, у основи римским, укусом и назорима о идеалном владару. За изражавање потчињености и дивљења РOMEЈА пред својим царем, уметници су прибегавали другачијим гестовима. Према мишљењу угледног византолога ти гестови били су “можда мање изражајни, али достојнији ‘грађана Римског царства’”. Стога је, како је сматрао Грабар, царска иконографија посезала за обрасцима, који су одражавали одавно преживелу друштвену датост. Андреј Грабар је веровао да је управо то разлог због којег византијска царска уметност није никако прихватала у свој репертоар јадан сасвим византијски мотив каква је била проскинеза.

Провери и пажљивијем разматрању тих схватања до сада није посвећена одговарајућа пажња. Сасвим кратко и недовољно одређено на Грабарове ставове осврнуо се Јоанис Спатаракис, не размотривши уопште аргументацију свог угледног претходника. Иначе, Спатаракисова аналитичка позиција у тој занимљивој и корисној студији није била у свему савршена. Његовој пажњи промакли су неки од кључних, најречитијих примера проскинезе у византијској уметности. Изгледа, да због свега тога поједини Спатаракисови закључци о статусу проскинезе у византијској уметности нису свесрдно прихваћени у науци. Нешто касније, Ентони Катлер и Пол Магдалино дотицали су се само узгред питања које је покренуо Грабар. Иако су били у прилици да укажу на поједине представе проскинезе Византинца пред царем, који су промакли Спатаракису, поменути аутори се нису упуштали у анализу Грабарових теза. Заправо, они слично Грабару истичу да такве слике представљају сасвим ретку појаву. То имплицира несклад између идеологије садржане у основи церемонијала и идеологије која је надахњивала слике, па нужно води ка закључку о извесном негативном ставу према проскинези РOMEЈА у византијској ликовној уметности.

У раду је пажљивије разматрано неколико мање познатих или непознатих представа које показују грађане византијског царства у дубокој проскинези пред василевсом (сл. 7-13). Нарочита пажња поклоњена је литерарном опису једне игубљене представе проскинезе протовестијара Јована пред царем Манојлом I. Она је била и с поносом истакнута изнад улаза у протовестијарову кућу у Цариграду, као потврда домаћинове оданости цару и блиског, рођачког односа с њим. Сви проучени примери довољно речито показују како представљање дубоке проскинезе РOMEЈА пред њиховим царем није било неприхватљиво византијској уметности. Сходно томе оно није систематски потискивано из те уметности. Уосталом, проскинеза је у Византији сматрана и привилегијом резервисаном за највише достојанственике у царству. О ставу Византинца према проскинези веом уверљиво сведочи илустровани рукопис Романа о Александру Великом из Венеције, настао у доба Палеолога у Трапезунтском царству. Он садржи већи број минијатура које показују представнике покорених народа, али и саме Македонце у коленопоклоном ставу пред Филипом и Александром Македонским с инсигнијама византијских василевса (сл. 14-15). Добро је познато да су антички Македонци исказивали снажан отпор увођењу проскинезе у церемонијал, сматрајући је персијским обичајем. Због тога је јасно да поменуте слике из Романа о Александру представљају препознатљиве цитате из византијског церемонијала. Оне указују на процес потпуно супротан од оног о којем је говорио Грабар. Очигледно је да су Византинци своје обичаје сматрали достојним херојских времена антике, па су их уносили и у слике догађаја што су се збили још у праскозорје хеленистичког доба.

